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None

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(54) Abstract Title

Mailbox for preventing exposure to hazardous substances contained in letters or parcels

(57) A mailbox comprises an inlet (8), which aligns with a mail slot in a door, an outlet with a closure means (20) and at least one flexible glove or gauntlet (10, 12) extending into a box (2), where at least a portion of the box is transparent. In use letters and parcels enter the box and are opened within the box to prevent exposure to any hazardous substance contained therein. The mail can be removed from the box using the outlet, which is preferably located in the base of the box.

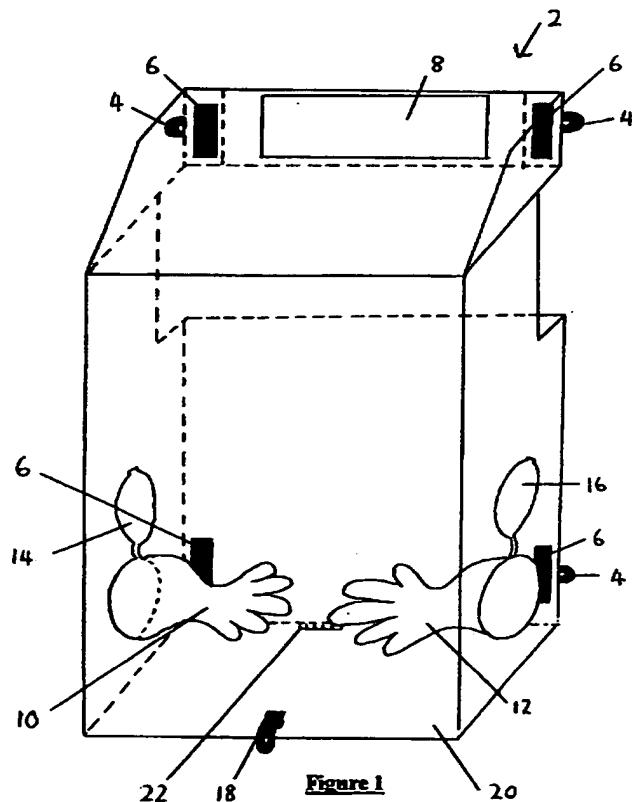
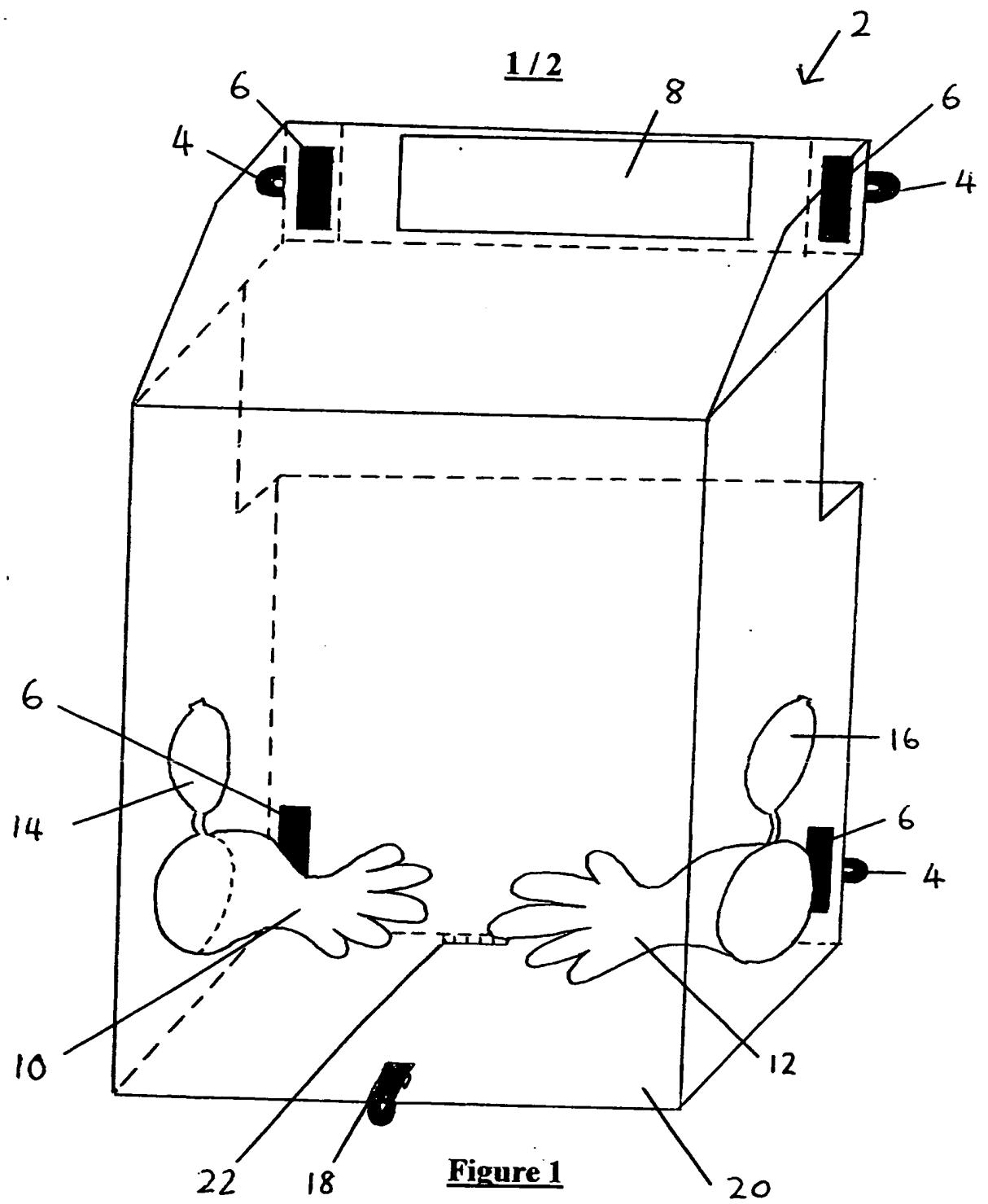


Figure 1

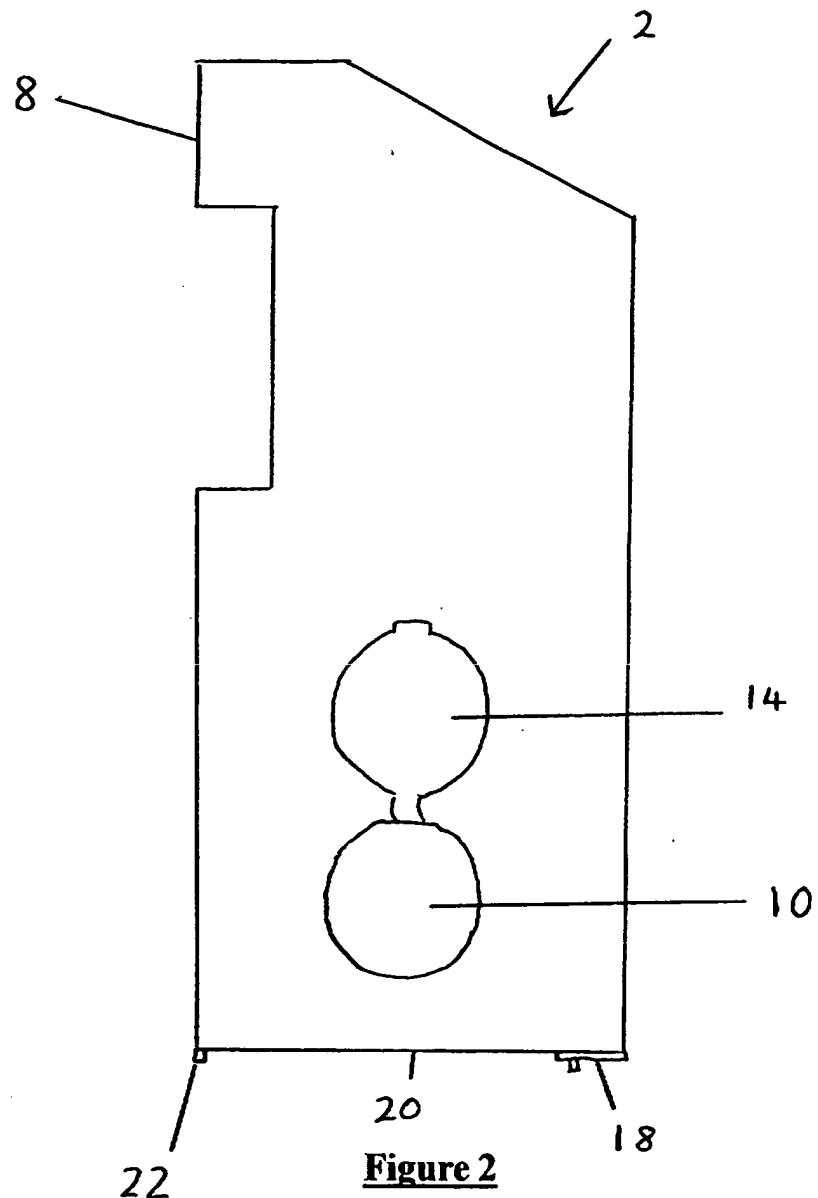
At least one drawing originally filed was informal and the print reproduced here is taken from a later filed formal copy.

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Security Mailbox

The present invention relates to a mailbox and, more particularly, to a mailbox arranged to provide a secure interface between the exterior and the interior of a building.

5       Concern has recently escalated over the possibility of bacterial substances being disseminated by terrorists via a public postal system, with a number of cases having been reported of Anthrax bacteria being posted to various private and government addresses.

10      I have now devised an arrangement intended to frustrate such terrorist actions.

In accordance with the present invention, there is provided a mailbox for fitting to a door and comprising:

15      an inlet aperture arranged to be aligned with a slot formed in the door to receive mail posted through the slot;

an outlet aperture provided with closure means for removing mail from the box; and

at least one flexible glove or gauntlet extending into the box for the manipulation of mail therein,

20      at least a portion of the box being transparent to enable the contents of the box to be viewed.

The mailbox may thus be employed to open and inspect the contents of a letter or parcel in isolation, i.e. without exposing the person opening the letter to any hazardous substance or device that might have been maliciously concealed therein.

Preferably the closure means are arranged to substantially hermetically seal the interior of the box.

30      Preferably the mailbox is arranged to form a substantially hermetic seal between the opposed surfaces of the mailbox and the door to which it is mounted, around the mail slot formed in the door.

Preferably the or each glove or gauntlet is formed from an elastomeric material. Preferably the mailbox is formed from 35 fire-resistant and/or blast proof materials.

Preferably the closure means comprise a hinged flap in or adjacent the base of the box.

Preferably said at least one glove or gauntlet comprises a pair of complementary left and right handed gloves 5 or gauntlets, which preferably extend into the mailbox from the front or from either side of the box.

Preferably the mouth of the or each glove or gauntlet is shrouded, when not in use, preferably by a displaceable flap or resiliently-dilatable curtain.

10 An embodiment of the present invention will now be described by way of an example only and with reference to the accompanying drawing which Figures 1 and 2 are respectively a front perspective view and a side elevation of mailbox in accordance with the present invention

15 Referring to the drawings, a reinforced, transparent Perspex<sup>TM</sup> mailbox 2 is shown, the box being arranged to be fitted to the interior side of a door, by a plurality of fastening devices, for example the screw fastenings 4 and/or Velcro<sup>TM</sup> pads 6 illustrated, such that an inlet aperture 8 of the 20 box is aligned with a mail slot formed in the door. Thus any mail posted through the mail slot will fall into the interior of the box through the inlet aperture 8.

25 A pair of flexible, elastomeric gloves 10,12 extend into the box, from opposite sides thereof, so that a person, having first inserted his hands into the gloves, may then readily manipulate any letter or parcel contained in the box.

When the gloves 10,12 are not in use, respective flaps 14,16 are arranged to be positioned over their mouths, to further reinforce the boundary between the interior and the 30 exterior of the box.

Once it has been established that the contents of a letter or parcel are safe, a catch 18 may be released and the base 20 of the box opened to release the contents of the box, by pivoting the base 20 about a hinge 22.

35 The mailbox thus described provides a convenient means

by which a letter or parcel may be opened and have its contents inspected without exposing the person opening the letter to any hazardous substance or device that might have been maliciously concealed therein.

Claims

- 1) A mailbox for fitting to a door and comprising:
  - an inlet aperture arranged to be aligned with a slot formed in the door to receive mail posted through the slot;
  - 5 an outlet aperture provided with closure means for removing mail from the box; and
    - at least one flexible glove or gauntlet extending into the box for the manipulation of mail therein,
    - at least a portion of the box being transparent to
  - 10 enable the contents of the box to be viewed.
- 2) A mailbox as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the closure means are arranged to substantially hermetically seal the interior of the box.
- 15 3) A mailbox as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2, arranged to form a substantially hermetic seal between the opposed surfaces of the mailbox and the door to which it is mounted, around the mail slot formed in the door.
- 4) A mailbox as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein
  - 20 the or each glove or gauntlet is formed from an elastomeric material.
- 5) A mailbox as claimed in any preceding claim, formed from fire-resistant materials.
- 6) A mailbox as claimed in any preceding claim, formed
  - 25 from blast proof materials.
- 7) A mailbox as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said closure means comprise a hinged flap in or adjacent the base of the box.

- 8) A mailbox as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said at least one glove or gauntlet comprises a pair of complementary left and right handed gloves or gauntlets.
- 9) A mailbox as claimed in Claim 8, wherein said pair of 5 gloves extend into the mailbox from the front.
- 10) A mailbox as claimed in Claim 8, wherein said pair of gloves extend into the mailbox from either side of the box.
- 11) A mailbox as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the mouth of the or each glove or gauntlet is shrouded, when 10 not in use.
- 12) A mailbox as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the mouth of the or each glove is shrouded by a displaceable flap
- 13) A mailbox as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein 15 the mouth of the or each glove is shrouded by a resiliently-dilatable curtain.
- 14) A mailbox substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying drawings.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Application No: GB 0128425.6  
Claims searched: all

Examiner: Joanne Pullen  
Date of search: 20 May 2002

## Patents Act 1977

### Search Report under Section 17

#### Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK Cl (Ed. T): E2X X10

Int Cl (Ed. 7): A47G

Other: Online: EPODOC, WPI, JAPIO.

#### Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage	Relevant to claims
	NONE	

X Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art
Y Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
& Member of the same patent family	E Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.

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